



Mold

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Molds are simple organisms that are found virtually everywhere, indoors and outdoors. The potential health effects of indoor mold are a growing concern. Mold can cause or worsen certain illnesses (e.g., some allergic and occupation-related diseases and infections in health care settings). However, no conclusive evidence exists that indoor mold is associated with a multitude of other health problems, such as pulmonary hemorrhage, memory loss, and lack of energy.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

- CDC's Mold Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/mold>) provides information on mold and health and links to resources. In conjunction with the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, CDC has created an inventory of state indoor air quality programs, which is available at http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/indoor_air.htm.
- CDC assists states in responding to mold-related issues, including offering technical assistance with assessment, clean-up efforts, and prevention of further mold growth and unnecessary exposure.
- CDC is strengthening state, local, and tribal capacity to respond to mold-related issues, including (1) determining the extent to which state programs establish coordinated responses to indoor mold exposures; (2) working with federal and other organizations to coordinate plans related to indoor air and mold; (3) developing a coordinated public response strategy; and (4) identifying resources for developing and implementing responses.
- CDC is developing an agenda for research, service, and education related to mold. As a first step, CDC contracted with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a study on the relation between damp or moldy indoor environments and the manifestation of adverse health effects and to provide recommendations for future research. The report is available at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309091934/html/>. CDC's mold-related agenda is expected to address subjects such as the following:
 - Characterizing environmental conditions that allow mold growth indoors and the association between indoor mold and disease or illness;
 - Improving the capacity of state, local, and tribal health departments to prevent, investigate, and control mold exposures;
 - Conducting and supporting research to define the association between damp or moldy indoor environments and harmful health effects.
- CDC is working with other federal agencies to conduct program and outreach/educational activities to promote healthy indoor environments.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will continue to assist states and others in responding to mold issues and develop an agenda for research, service, and education. CDC is working with other federal agencies to plan and conduct a Surgeon General's Workshop on Healthy Indoor Environments to enhance the understanding of the public health consequences of the non-industrial indoor environment and to provide guidance to the Surgeon General and the public health community in promoting public health in those settings. The workshop is scheduled to be held in January 2005.